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SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT

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A PLACER COUNTY
GENERAL PLAN ELEMENT
MAY, 1977

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter I - Introduction	
Purpose of the Scenic Highway Element	1
Background and Philosophy of Scenic Highways . .	2
Chapter II - Goals and Policies	
Introduction	6
Goals and Policies	6
Chapter III - Selection of Scenic Routes	
Criteria for Selection of Candidate Routes . . .	9
Criteria for Establishing Corridor Boundaries . .	10
Range of Visibility	11
Scenic Characteristics	13
Administrative Considerations	14
Chapter IV - Candidate Routes	
State Scenic Highway System	16
Highway 89	16
Highway 28	18
Interstate 80	18
Highway 20	19
Highway 49	20
Placer County Scenic Highway System	21
Auburn Folsom Road	22
Douglas Boulevard	23
Sierra College Boulevard	24
Rocklin Road Extension	25
Indian Hill Road	26



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	<u>Page</u>
Bell Road	26
Auburn Ravine Road	27
East Lincoln Way	28
Auburn Foresthill Road	28
Ruck-A-Chucky Road	30
Baker Ranch - Soda Springs Road	31
Mosquito Ridge Route	32
Squaw Valley Road	33
Alpine Meadows Road	34
Ward Valley Route	35
State Highway 267	35
Interstate 80	36
 Chapter V - Protection of Scenic Routes	
Development Controls	39
Plans	39
Zoning	41
Subdivision Regulations	42
Underground Utilities	44
Other Regulatory Programs	45
Bibliography	47
Acknowledgements	48

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Scenic Corridor Boundary Delineation	12
2	Local Routes within the California Scenic Highway Master Plan	16 a
3	Placer County Scenic Highway Plan	22 a

INTRODUCTION



I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The scenic resources visible from State and local highways in Placer County are some of the finest in the State of California. The scenery along these routes range from pastoral country scenes of the Loomis Basin to majestic views of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Preservation and enhancement of these resources has been an on-going effort in Placer County for many years. The Placer County General Plan, adopted in 1967, was based on the protection and conservation of the County's natural and environmental amenities. This report will expand on this overall objective and serve as a more detailed policy statement for the protection of Placer County's scenic resources.

PURPOSE OF SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT

The Scenic Highway Element for Placer County is designed to meet the legislative requirement, (Section 65302 (h) of the Government Code) adopted in 1972, that counties and cities include within their General Plans "A Scenic Highway Element for the development, establishment, and protection of scenic highways pursuant to the provisions of Article 2.5 (Commencing with Section 260) of Chapter 2, Division 1 of Streets and Highways Code." Further, it provides the basis for selecting those State and local routes which are to receive official or unofficial designation as "Scenic Highways".

Stated more fully, this element is intended to establish County policy regarding:

1. Goals, policies, and general standards for the development of a scenic route system and the preservation and enhancement of adjacent and visible scenic areas.
2. Designation of candidate scenic routes with recommended protection measures.
3. Coordination of scenic route proposals and programs with adjoining cities and counties, concerned citizen groups, and interested individuals.
4. Relation of Scenic Highway Element to Open Space, Conservation and Recreation, and Transportation Elements of the County General Plan.

It should be noted that the Scenic Highway Element is not designed or intended to impose unnecessary or unjustifiable restrictions on public or private property. It merely orients itself toward a reasonable solution to the problem of regulating undesirable or incompatible types of land use in scenic areas.

BACKGROUND AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCENIC HIGHWAYS

The concern of the public in California for protection of environmental quality has reached unprecedented heights in the past few years. Requirements for Conservation and Open Space Elements of the General Plan and strict

requirements for the evaluation of environmental impacts through the provisions of the 1970 California Environmental Quality Act serve as examples.

Predating these efforts, however, was the attention given to improving and preserving the quality of our visual environment through the California Master Plan for Scenic Highways. The Master Plan initially grew out of a citizen movement to reassess the need for construction of a freeway along the rugged California coast south of Monterey. Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) No. 26 in 1960 authorized a prototype scenic roads study for the purpose of preserving the natural beauty bordering State Route 1. In the following year the Legislature authorized further investigation of the Scenic Highway concept.

Pursuant to SCR 4 in 1962, a Citizens Advisory Committee, assisted by an Interdepartmental Committee on Scenic Highways, prepared a preliminary plan for scenic routes. Both committees were continued in existence to further address specific technical questions and to refine and develop a final report. This report, entitled A Plan for Scenic Highways in California, was submitted to the Legislature in March of 1963. Its conclusions and recommendations became the basis of legislation commonly referred to as the Scenic Highway Law. The law established a statewide Scenic Highway Program "... as an important part of the all encompassing effort which the State must take to protect and enhance California's beauty,

amenity and quality of life".

This program included a master plan illustrating the state routes eligible for designation as scenic highways and authorized the creation and application of scenic highway standards.

Adoption of the Scenic Highway Law set forth California's interest in scenic highway conservation and recognized the necessity of a cooperative effort by State and local governments in the designation and protection of scenic corridors.

Companion legislation also adopted in 1963 (Section 154 of the Streets and Highways Code) was designed to encourage counties to develop their own systems of scenic highways to complement the statewide system. The procedural mechanics for development and implementation of official designation are the same as for the State system. However, in the county systems, action by local government is permissive while in the case of the State system, local-state cooperation is required.

In 1972, the Scenic Highway Element was mandated by the State as a General Plan element. It is the only element which addresses the issue of visual aesthetics and as such can play a unique role in increasing public preception and appreciation of local scenic beauty. The Scenic Highways Element (SHE) is also a tool for improving and expanding recreational facilities, from parks and roadside rests to

bicycle and hiking trails; safe-guarding property values; improving land management; and, a host of other community beautification projects. The SHE can assist in the implementation of other General Plan elements by:

- Providing for the establishment of open space networks and thus more effectively linking open space areas to form a coherent system.
- Linking recreational areas as identified in the Recreation Element.
- Incorporating scenic values as a component of future roadways into the policies of the Transportation Element.

The candidate scenic route system which is proposed in this element is based on the premise that scenic conservation is important to the well-being of local residents and that scenic beauty is to be found in a variety of places. Both urban and rural areas may have scenic value. High speed and low speed; heavy traffic volume or lightly utilized roads may all be considered appropriate system choices.

The standards and selection criteria which are discussed in Chapter III attempt to more precisely define which is scenic and where priorities should lie.



GOALS AND POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

The following goals relate to the overall end results desired of the Scenic Highway program. Goals are the cornerstones of the planning process, since they provide both direction and a framework within which the decision making process can occur. Goals are interpreted in greater detail by their supporting policies which suggest specific means for reaching the desired results.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal #1 To preserve, enhance, and protect the scenic resources visible from scenic highways in Placer County.

Policies

1. To encourage and utilize existing County programs for protection and enhancement of scenic corridors, including but not limited to design review, sign control, undergrounding utilities, scenic setbacks, density limitations, planned unit developments, grading and tree removal standards, open space easements, and land conservation contracts.
2. To require the use of aesthetic design considerations for road construction, reconstruction, or maintenance for all scenic highways.
3. To encourage anti-litter, beautification and cleanup programs along scenic routes.

4. To provide for landscaping and landscaped mounding where desirable to maintain and improve scenic qualities and screen unsightly views.

Goal #2 To develop a system of scenic highways capable of serving the needs of residents and visitors to Placer County.

Policies

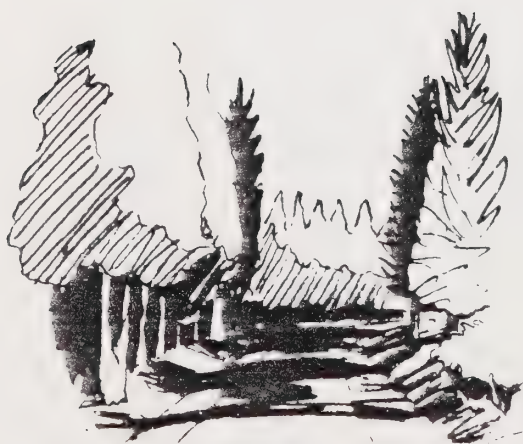
1. To link major points of historical interest and recreational activity within the County.
2. To provide coordination of scenic highway programs between jurisdictions, recognizing that scenic routes are a resource of more than local importance.
3. To provide a variety of scenic routes within the County in order to preserve outstanding scenic quality within different geographical settings.

Goal #3 To promote and enhance the historic and recreational opportunities in Placer County.

Policies

1. To encourage the establishment of scenic highways which provide access to recreational, historical, and cultural facilities.
2. To encourage uses such as trails, picnicing, observation points, parks, and roadside rests along scenic highways as appropriate.
3. To inventory and take steps to protect and maintain historical landmarks and historical monuments along scenic routes.

4. To encourage the use of bicycles as an alternative mode of travel for recreational purposes in scenic corridors.



III

SELECTION OF SCENIC ROUTES

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF CANDIDATE ROUTES

In an attempt to provide a logical and meaningful method of evaluating potential scenic routes in Placer County, a Scenic Highways Selection Committee was formed representing various agencies interested and knowledgeable in scenic highways. Included on the Committee were the Scenic Highways Coordinator for the California State Department of Transportation, District 3, a landscape architect from the United States Forest Service with a background in visual resource management, the Manager for the Placer County Chamber of Commerce, and representatives of the Placer County Departments of Public Works and Planning. The criteria used by the committee in evaluating potential routes are as follows:

1. Quality of foreground views.
2. Quality of middle and background views.
3. Used as an entry route to the County or a community.
4. Used as a route to recreation area(s).
5. Used by high percentage of sensitive viewers.
6. Used for one-day sightseeing trips.
7. Historical or special interest sites along the route.
8. Listed as scenic highway on the State Master Plan or in a local general plan.
9. Connects with adjoining City or County scenic highway.

10. Development potential along route.

11. Heavily used route.

Various routes throughout the County were reviewed using these criteria and many were selected for inclusion in the element. Logical connectors or links between routes meeting the selection criteria have also been considered to be eligible provided they contribute to the completion of a closed loop or system of routes.

CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING CORRIDOR BOUNDARIES

While it is not within the purview of the Scenic Highways Element to delineate specific scenic corridor boundaries, a general discussion of the methodology is necessary. Each route recommended as a scenic highway in this element will be studied in more detail at a later date to determine whether special regulations or zoning designations are required for protection purposes. At such time as special regulations are determined to be the best or only means of scenic protection, a specific corridor study will be undertaken. For areas where existing land use controls are adequate to protect the scenic environment, specific studies and special regulations may not be necessary.

Because of the great diversity of scenic resources in and among urban and rural areas, a wide variety of

criteria will be used to delineate an individual corridor. These criteria are not precise, but involve judgemental decisions on exactly how much is scenic and how much is not. In general, items to be considered fall into three broad categories. These are:

- The range of visibility
- Scenery characteristics
- Administrative considerations

It should be noted that some conflict between criteria may occur during the process of selecting corridor boundaries. The intent of the criteria, however, is to place the highest priority on logical natural boundaries. To this end, judgment as to the relative importance of the conflicting criteria may be necessary.

The Range of Visibility

a. Topography

When a land form, such as a hill or crest of a ridge, brings the motorists' range of vision close to the right-of-way, the entire visible area should be included in the corridor. This concept is illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page.

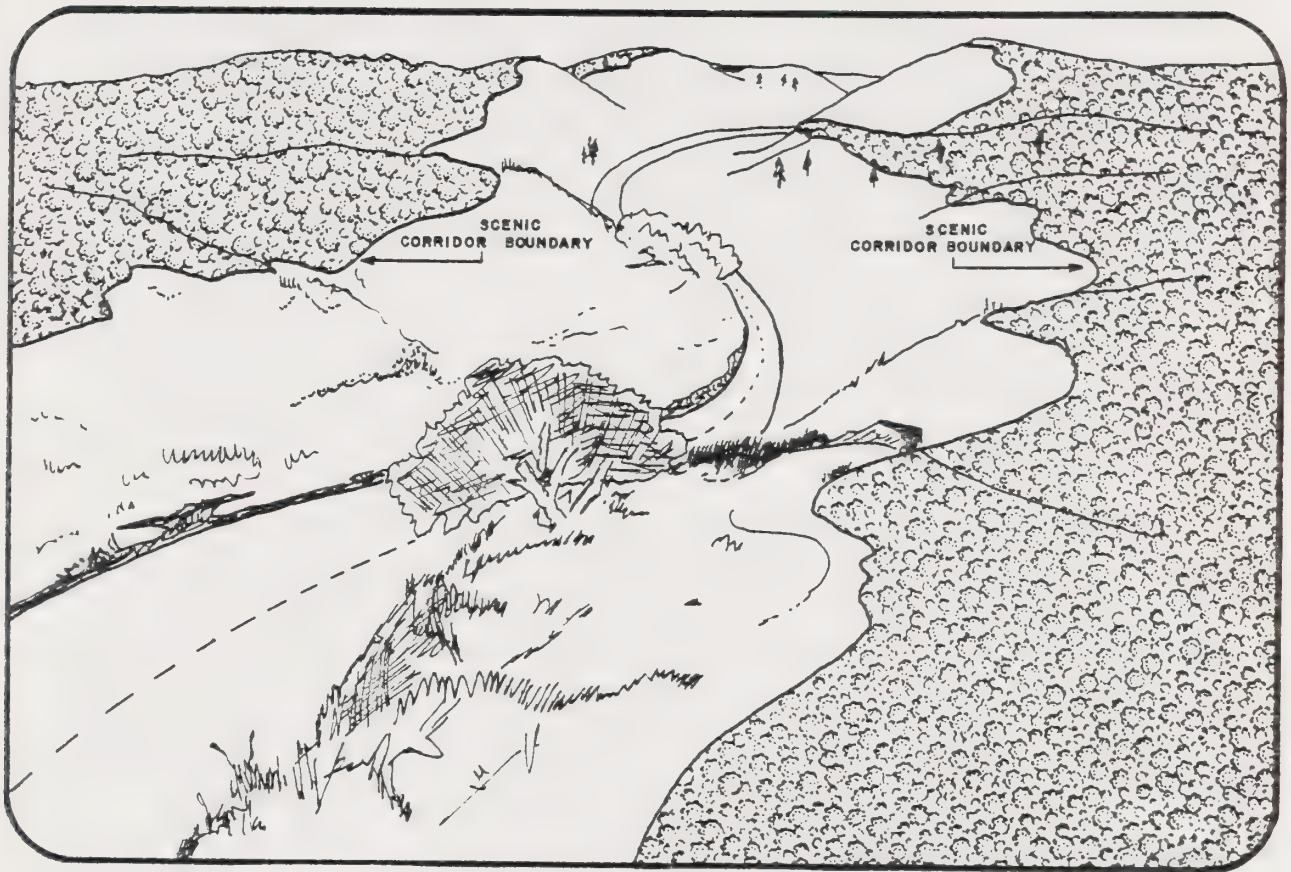


Figure 1

Scenic Corridor Boundary Delineation

b. Vegetation

Orchards or other dense vegetation may constitute a screen at the edge of the highway. Since the possibility exists that this screen could be removed by fire, harvesting, land use change or even the selective cutting for visual enhancement, consideration of the view beyond this screen is important.

c. Structures

As in the preceeding, structures need not be a controlling factor in establishing corridor boundaries.

d. Distance Visibility

Where the range of visibility from the scenic route encompasses a distant horizon or vast panorama, a closer corridor boundary may be selected based on criteria other than visibility.

Scenic Characteristics

a. Natural and Man-made Features

Such outstanding natural features as water and geological formations and man-made features of architectural, historical or civic value, should be included in the corridor together with their surrounding area.

b. Landscape Character

All types of landscaping, whether wild, cultivated or urban in nature, may have scenic value and ought to be included in the corridor. The State Scenic Highway System was chosen with a diversity of landscapes and seasonal and climatic variations in mind. A countywide system of scenic routes should also take the need for diversity into account. In urban areas, the density of the landscaping or development may necessitate a narrower corridor than in rural areas.

c. Visual Impact

The visual impact of a feature of an area may be evaluated in terms of its uniqueness, its size, its detail and its boldness of form, vividness of color and any other important characteristics which relate to its distance from the scenic route and its duration of visibility. The degree of this impact is an important consideration for the inclusion of the feature in the scenic corridor.

Administrative Considerations

a. Probable Methods of Protection

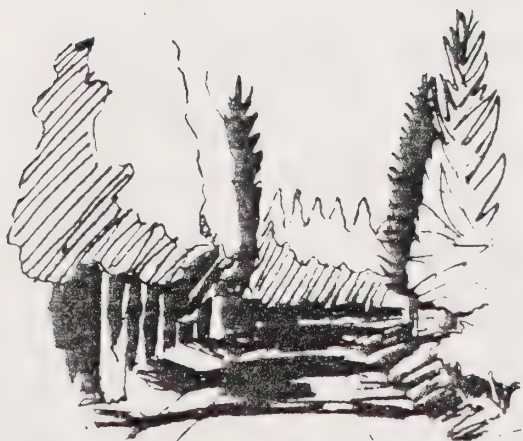
The possibility that certain scenic areas may be protected by such means as the acquisition of land for a public park or open space, agricultural preserve contract, or low density may influence the actual specific scenic corridor boundaries. This underscores the importance of studying such specific implementation measures at the same time corridor boundaries are designated.

b. Legal Boundaries

Since they are to be used for administrative purposes, the precise boundaries of the corridor should coincide with property lines, zoning district boundaries, city limits or other legal designations wherever possible.

c. Arbitrary Delineation

In the absence of criteria such as those described on the preceding pages, or because of factors beyond the control of local jurisdictions, a constant line, arbitrarily selected, may be used as a corridor boundary. Even if this is necessary, innovative techniques or other criteria not mentioned herein should be considered.



IV

CANDIDATE ROUTES

STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS SYSTEM

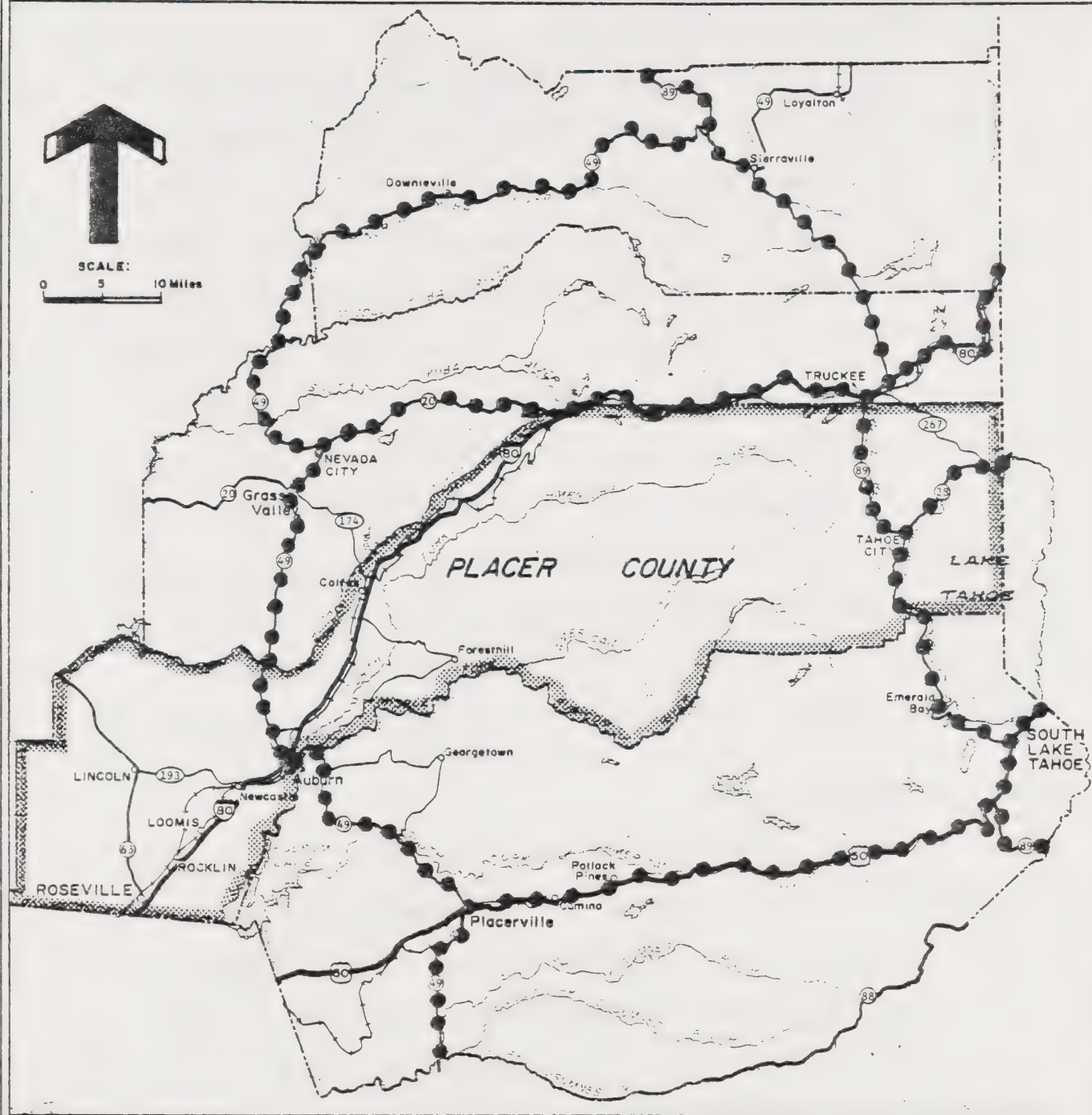
One of the principle objectives of the Scenic Highway Element as expressed in the Council on Inter-Governmental Relations (CIR) General Plan Guidelines is to encourage implementation of the State Master Plan for Scenic Highways. This Master Plan, as created by State law in 1963, identifies those highways in the State that are eligible for designation as Official California Scenic Highways. To qualify, a highway must meet scenic highway standards as set forth in the California Department of Transportation publication A Guide for the Official Designation of Eligible Scenic Highways and have a specific plan and program for the protection and enhancement of the scenic corridor which has been adopted and implemented by the local jurisdiction.

CANDIDATE ROUTES

In Placer County, as shown in Figure 2, Highways 89 and 28 in the Lake Tahoe Area, Highway 49 in the Auburn area, and small portions of Interstate 80 and Highway 20 above Emigrant Gap are shown on the Master Plan and eligible for official designation. A description and comment regarding each route is provided below.

Highway 89

Description: The entire portion of this State highway within Placer County is shown on the Master Plan and eligible for official designation.



Local Routes Within The California Scenic Highway Master Plan

FIGURE 2.

It traverses a highly scenic area along the west shore of Lake Tahoe from the El Dorado County line near Tahoe to Tahoe City and down the Truckee River Corridor to the Nevada County line approximately 1 mile south of Truckee.

Approximate length - 19 miles

Points of Interest:

a. Lake Tahoe

Many outstanding views of Lake Tahoe are provided along this route, especially in the Homewood/McKinney Bay Area.

b. Tahoe City

The Fanny Bridge and Gatekeepers cabin are two of the noted points of interest in Tahoe City.

c. Truckee River

North of Tahoe City on Highway 89 the traveler is treated to a pleasant ride down the Truckee River Corridor. The river is one of the county's most popular recreational water ways.

d. Ski Areas

The Homewood, Tahoe Ski Bowl, Alpine Meadows, and Squaw Valley ski areas are all located just off Highway 89 in Placer County.

Comment: Highway 89 received the highest rating of the State highways reviewed by the Scenic Highways Selection Committee and is shown on the State Master Plan. This route should be submitted to the State for official designation as a California Scenic Highway.

Highway 28

Description: This route is essentially a continuation of the Highway 89 scenic route along the shore of Lake Tahoe. Highway 28 begins at the "Y" in Tahoe City and continues around the lake to the California-Nevada border. The view is interrupted in many areas by commercial and residential development although a few open stretches exist where the Lake can be seen.

Approximate length - 10 miles

Points of Interest:

a. Lake Tahoe

The outstanding scenic qualities of Lake Tahoe are visible from certain points along this highway.

b. Resort Communities

The communities of Tahoe City, Carnelian Bay, Tahoe Vista, Kings Beach and Brockway are located along this route.

Comment: Since this highway is the continuation of the lakeshore route around Lake Tahoe and is included in the State Master Plan, it is recommended that official designation be applied for concurrently with the Highway 89 submittal.

Interstate 80

Description: A small portion of I-80 between Cisco Grove and Norden is included in the State Master Plan. The balance of I-80 within the State Scenic System is located outside of Placer County. The scenic quality is high

in this area with typical high sierra scenery found along the route.

Approximate length - 7 miles

Points of Interest:

a. Yuba River

I-80 follows the Yuba River along this stretch and small cascading waterfalls are visible from numerous points.

b. Recreation Areas

Campground and resort areas exist at Cisco Grove and Rainbow.

Comment: It would be very desirable to have this portion of I-80 designated as an Official State Scenic Highway, however, it is recommended that application be withheld until such time that Nevada County submits for their portion of this route.

Highway 20

Description: As indicated in Figure 2 only a small portion of Highway 20 near Emigrant Gap is within Placer County. The scenery primarily consists of a tree lined corridor leading to a large open meadow.

Approximate length - 3 miles

Comment: The major portion of this route is within Nevada County and it is therefore recommended that any request for official designation be filed concurrently with Nevada County.

Highway 49

Description: This route includes all of Highway 49 located within Placer County. The current alignment begins at the Placer/El Dorado County Line at the American River and proceeds up the American River Canyon through the City of Auburn and North to the Placer/Nevada County Line at the Bear River. The construction of the Auburn Dam will result in the relocation of Highway 49.

Approximate Length - 10 miles

Points of Interest:

a. City of Auburn

The historical features of Old Town Auburn are located immediately off this route.

b. Placer County Courthouse

The newly constructed portion of Highway 49 passes by this historically significant courthouse.

c. American River Canyon

The existing alignment of this route provides some panoramic views of the American River Canyon. Upon completion of the Auburn Dam the relocated route will provide views of the Auburn Reservoir and the American River below the dam.

Comment: This route is an important link in the "Golden Chain" which winds through the scenic and historic Motherlode country. Official designation as a California State Scenic Highway should be requested for this popular recreational and

historical route. This request should be filed concurrently with a similar request from the City of Auburn, since a portion of the route is within the City's jurisdiction.

PLACER COUNTY SCENIC HIGHWAYS SYSTEM

Section 154 of the California Streets and Highways Code provides the opportunity for counties to develop their own scenic highways systems which are separate from and complementary to the State system. The Scenic Highway Element is designed to provide the basis for selecting those routes which will eventually make up the County's system of scenic highways.

Although the code provides for official designation by the State for routes within the County System it is not suggested this be pursued as it is felt the County's scenic highways program should be solely of Local origin and thus can be designed and modified to fit local needs, desires and priorities. For the purposes of this report "Official Scenic Highways" are those within the State System and "Unofficial Scenic Highways" are those within the County's system.

CANDIDATE ROUTES

The following routes, as shown in figure 3, are proposed as Placer County's Scenic Highways. These routes, unless otherwise noted, are totally within the land use jurisdiction of Placer County.

Auburn-Folsom Road

Description: This route extends from the Placer/Sacramento County line near Folsom Lake up through the Loomis Basin to the Auburn City limits. The scenery is mostly rural with the exception of the developed area near Granite Bay.

Featured are scenic rural areas and a panoramic view of Folsom Lake at the northern most portion of the route.

Approximate length - 13 miles

Points of Interest:

a. Folsom Lake

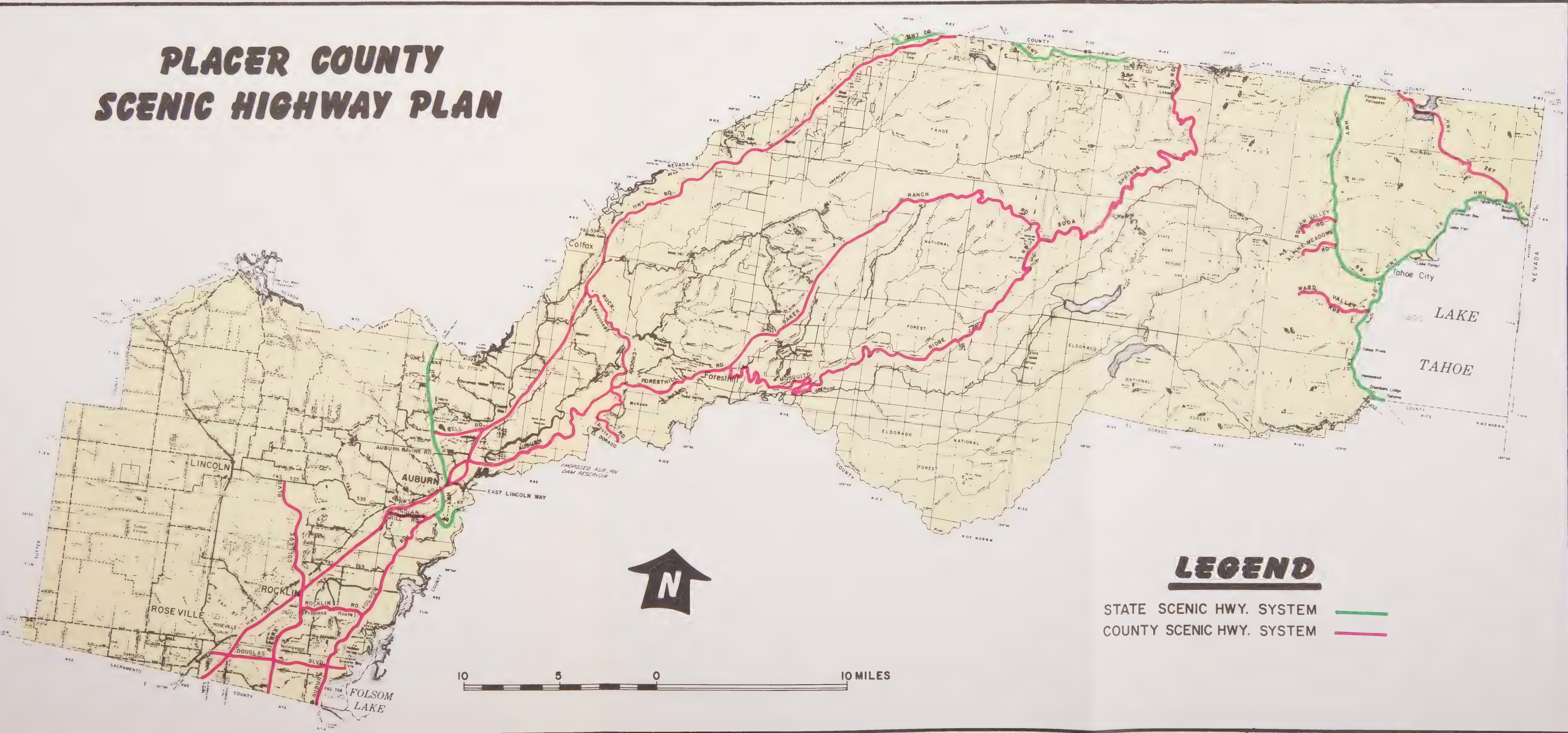
Auburn Folsom Road provides access to the Folsom Lake area at Granite Bay, Beales Point, and Rattlesnake Bar.

b. Miners Ravine

This route follows Miners Ravine for approximately 6 miles through the heart of the Loomis Basin. This watershed provides a natural buffer of heavy oak tree stands and riparian vegetation.

Comment: This route received one of the highest ratings of the County roads reviewed by the Scenic Highways Selection Committee. The Loomis Basin General Plan recommends that it be given consideration as a Scenic Highway. It is recommended that a detailed scenic corridor study be made to establish the "Corridor" and determine what measures should be taken to preserve and enhance it. It is suggested here that such study not include the use of any scenic

PLACER COUNTY SCENIC HIGHWAY PLAN



highway signs or other promotional devices as encouraging additional traffic along this route would not be desirable.

Douglas Boulevard

Description: This route begins at the Roseville City Limits where Douglas Boulevard intersects with Sierra College Boulevard and extends out to the entrance of Folsom Lake.

Douglas Boulevard is the major access road to the Folsom Lake State Park and is also heavily used by residents of the Loomis Basin/South Placer area.

Approximate length - 4 miles

Points of Interest:

a. Folsom Lake

Folsom Lake State Park is one of the most heavily used recreation areas in the Sacramento region.

b. Rural Scenery

The major portion of this route is still relatively rural in nature and provides a pleasant trip to the Folsom Lake Recreation area. Oak trees line much of the route providing a natural visual buffer from developed areas.

Comment: Douglas Boulevard did not receive a high rating from the Scenic Highways Selection Committee due mainly to some of the existing urbanization along the route. It is recommended as a scenic highway primarily for its value as the major route to the Folsom Lake Recreation Area. Placer County should take the necessary steps to preserve the scenic

qualities of this major recreation access road. The Loomis Basin General Plan did suggest that this route be considered as a scenic highway.

Sierra College Boulevard

Description: This route begins at the Sacramento/Placer County line and extends northward across Interstate 80 up to its intersection with Highway 193 near the town of Lincoln. The scenery becomes increasingly rural and open as one travels northerly on this route. Panoramic views of the Loomis/South Placer Basin, the Roseville Area, the Penryn Area, and the Sacramento Valley are all taken in by the traveler.

Approximate length - 12 miles

Points of Interest:

a. Sierra College

The campus of this junior college is located at the intersection of Sierra College Boulevard and Rocklin Road near the town of Rocklin. Approximately 8,000 students, including both day and evening sessions, are currently attending this school, many of whom travel Sierra College Boulevard on a daily basis.

b. Agricultural Areas

Large ranches are located along the northerly portion of this route which provide scenic open pasture land kept green year-round. A few small fruit orchards in the

Penryn area are also visible from Sierra College Boulevard.

Comment: This route is also recommended as a scenic highway in the Loomis Basin General Plan and received a very high rating by the Scenic Highways Selection Committee. It is therefore suggested that a detailed scenic corridor study be made for this route.

Rocklin Road Extension

Description: This route includes both the existing section of Rocklin Road from the Rocklin City limits near Sierra College out to Barton Road and the proposed extension from that point across to Auburn-Folsom Road. The extension, when completed, will provide another access road from I-80 to Auburn-Folsom Road, Folsom Lake, and many rural-residential areas in the Loomis Basin.

Approximate length - 1 mile (existing) 3 miles (proposed)

Comment: Rocklin Road extension is another route recommended as a scenic highway in the Loomis Basin General Plan. It, however, did not receive a high rating from the scenic Highway Selection Committee due primarily to the urbanized portion of this road near the City of Rocklin. Scenic Highway designation is none the less recommended since this route will be traveled by many individuals with a high degree of sensitivity to scenic quality.

The scenic corridor for this route should be established when the alignment for the proposed extension has been established. This will insure protection of the corridor and establish road design and construction standards which are sensitive to the scenic resources.

Indian Hill Road

Description: This route begins at its intersection with I-80 near the town of Newcastle and extends easterly to Auburn-Folsom Road. The scenic resources include foreground views of small ranches and background views of Folsom Lake and the Sacramento Valley. Indian Hill Road will become a major recreation access road when the Auburn Dam project is completed since it provides a direct link between I-80 and the new alignment of Highway 49.

Approximate length - 2.5 miles

Comment: This route received one of the higher ratings from the Scenic Highways Selection Committee. It is recommended that a specific scenic corridor study be made prior to completion of the Auburn Dam project.

Bell Road

Description: Only that portion of Bell Road from Highway 49 to I-80 is being recommended as a scenic highway. This is the newly constructed portion of Bell Road and it provides a very open and scenic drive for the residents of the

Auburn area and others who use it as a connector between the two highways. The scenery is reflective of the natural terrain of the Sierra Foothills with a mix of Oak and Pine trees accented by grassy open areas.

Approximate length - 2 1/2 miles

Comment: This route is one of the most scenic roads in the Auburn Area and it provides a link between two major scenic highways. It is recommended that a specific scenic corridor study be made prior to or concurrent with the Auburn General Plan update.

Auburn Ravine Road

Description: This route includes the northern portion of Auburn Ravine Road from the Auburn City limits easterly across I-80 to East Lincoln Way. The City of Auburn has included Auburn Ravine Road within its Scenic Highway Element and this is an attempt to cooperate with the City by including the balance of this route within Placer County's Scenic Highways Element. The scenic quality is marginal as a large industrial yard is one of the primary land uses along the small section of this route within Placer County.

Approximate length - 3/4 mile

Comment: Since the major portion of this route is within the City of Auburn it is recommended that a specific scenic corridor study be made at the time the City undertakes a similar study.

East Lincoln Way

Description: This is a similar situation to the Auburn Ravine Route as East Lincoln Way is the northerly extension of Lincoln Way which is a Scenic Highway within the City of Auburn. For this reason it is recommended as a Placer County Scenic Highway to complete the link to Auburn-Foresthill Road. The corridor along this route has been developed with residences and commercial uses and therefore the scenic value is limited.

Approximate length - 3/4 mile

Comment: The major portion of this route is within the City of Auburn and it is therefore recommended that any special corridor studies also be coordinated with the City.

Auburn-Foresthill Road

Description: This route begins at its intersection with East Lincoln Way in the Train Village area north of Auburn and extends easterly across the new Foresthill Bridge through the historic town of Foresthill ending at Baker Ranch. The scenic quality is exceptional along this route with panoramic vistas of the American River Canyon and the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range highlighting the foreground views of natural open areas within an oak and pine tree-studded corridor.

Approximate length: 25 miles

Points of Interest:

a. Foresthill Bridge

The Foresthill Bridge was constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1972 as a part of the Auburn Dam Project. The bridge spans approximately 2400 feet across the American River Canyon. Overlook areas have been provided at both ends of the bridge providing views of the American River Canyon and the future Auburn Reservoir.

b. Historical Sites

A number of historical markers are planned to be installed along this route by the Placer County Parks and Historical Restoration Commission. They will provide information relating to the early ranchers and miners of the Foresthill Divide.

c. Town of Foresthill

This route passes through the downtown portion of historic Foresthill. Many of the original structures are still in use and provide another taste of the past in this area rich in motherlode history.

Comment: Auburn-Foresthill Road received one of the higher ratings from the Scenic Highways Selection Committee. It is included in the Gold Rush Parkway as adopted by Placer County.

The California State Department of Parks and Recreation has indicated that they are interested in this route being a scenic highway as it would compliment their plans for recreation development along the Foresthill peninsula in conjunction with the Auburn Reservoir project. A specific scenic corridor study should be prepared to provide the necessary protective measures for this scenic route.

Ruck-A-Chucky Route

Description: This is the proposed "Upper Crossing" route which will provide additional access to the Foresthill Divide area as originally planned as part of the Auburn Dam project. The proposed alignment begins at the Placer/El Dorado County line where the proposed Ruck-A-Chucky Bridge will cross the Middle Fork of the American River and extend north across Auburn-Foresthill Road and the North Fork of the American River to Canyon Way and on to Interstate 80 approximately 1 mile south of Colfax. The scenery will range from views of the Middle and North Fork canyons of the American River to vistas of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Approximate Length: 12 miles

Comment: This route will provide additional access to the recreation areas as proposed in the Auburn Reservoir Recreation Plan currently being developed by the State Department of Parks and Recreation. The scenic resources visible from this route will, of course, be as natural and untouched as is

possible since the construction will take place in areas which were previously inaccessible. These resources should be preserved through a specific scenic corridor study prepared in cooperation with the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation and the State Department of Parks and Recreation.

Baker Ranch-Soda Springs Road

Description: This route begins at Baker Ranch and continues up the Foresthill Divide through mostly U. S. Forest Service land to the Placer/Nevada County line at Soda Springs. The major portion of this road is unpaved and used primarily by loggers and recreationalists. The scenery is spectacular where the forest cover opens to views of the Royal Gorge area, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the Sacramento Valley.

Approximate Length: 46 miles

Points of Interest:

A. Baker Ranch

This route begins at the site of the historic Baker Ranch where early miners, ranchers, and others traveling through the area stopped to rest their horses and purchase supplies. A few of the original buildings remain today.

b. Royal Gorge Area

This route provides numerous panoramic vistas of the Royal Gorge area of the North Fork of the American River. Hiking trails into this area begin at various points along this route.

c. French Meadows Reservoir

The north end of this popular fishing and camping area is accessible from Baker Ranch-Soda Springs Road.

Comment: This route is basically an extension of Auburn-Foresthill Road and it also received a high rating from the Scenic Highways Selection Committee. The visual resources on lands along this route should be evaluated by a specific scenic corridor study prepared through cooperation and coordination with the Forest Service as lead agency during their land management planning processes. The existing visual quality resources should be preserved.

Mosquito Ridge Route

Description: This route begins at the town of Foresthill and extends easterly through the Middle Fork of the American River Canyon across mostly United States Forest Service land to its intersection with Baker Ranch-Soda Springs Road. The last 3 miles of this route is referred to as Robertson's Flat Road. The French Meadows and Hell Hole Recreation areas are served by this route. This route provides many views of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, as well as typical mountain foreground scenery.

Approximate length: 31 miles

Points of Interest:

a. Big Trees

Located directly off this route is the site of Placer County's Big Trees Redwood Grove.

b. French Meadows/Hell Hole Area

Most recreationalists traveling Mosquito Ridge Road are going to this area. The camping and fishing is some of the best Placer County has to offer.

Comment: This route provides access to a major recreation area in Placer County and its scenic resources should be protected. The visual resources on lands along this route should be evaluated by a specific scenic corridor study prepared through cooperation and coordination with the Forest Service as lead agency during their land management planning processes. The existing visual quality resources should be preserved.

Squaw Valley Road

Description: Squaw Valley Road begins at Highway 89 eight miles south of Truckee and extends westerly through Squaw Valley along the valley floor ending in front of the tram building at the ski base. The scenery is spectacular as this route provides views of rugged mountain peaks at the end of the valley and tree-covered south slopes across a beautiful open grassy meadow. The 1960 Winter Olympics were held in Squaw Valley and it remains a major ski area attracting thousands of skiers each year.

Approximate length: 2.5 miles

Comment: This route received the highest rating of the Scenic Highways Selection Committee. This was due primarily to its exceptional scenic quality and heavy use as a recreation area. A specific scenic corridor study should be made to insure protection of this valuable scenic resource.

Alpine Meadows Road

Description: This route begins at Highway 89 just north of Squaw Valley and follows Bear Creek up through Bear Valley to the parking lot of the Alpine Meadows Ski Area. The scenic assets of this route include a stream environment zone along Bear Creek dotted with aspen trees, forested south slopes, rugged north slopes, and a few small meadow areas. This is another popular ski area and is also used during the summer months by many backpackers.

Approximate length: 3.5 miles

Comment: The Scenic Highways Selection Committee also rated this route very high as it too provides outstanding scenery and access to a major ski area. The visual resources on lands along this route should be evaluated by a specific scenic corridor study prepared through cooperation and coordination with the Forest Service as lead agency during their land management planning processes. The existing visual quality resources should be preserved.

Ward Valley Route

Description: This route consists of 3 separate County roads, Pineland Drive, Ward Creek Blvd., and Courchevel Drive, which, together, form one access route into Ward Valley. The route begins along the west shore of Lake Tahoe where Pineland Drive intersects with Highway 89. From there it winds through a residential area where it connects to Ward Creek Blvd.; it then proceeds up Ward Valley to Courchevel Drive; from this point it extends through another subdivision to the end of Courchevel Drive. The route provides good views of the Valley itself, as well as a few scenic glimpses of Lake Tahoe.

Approximate length: 4 miles

Comment: This route is not used heavily and does not attract large numbers of recreation users. It is, however, very scenic and provides views of a valley which remains basically in its natural state. The Selection Committee gave this route one of the higher ratings and a specific scenic corridor study is therefore recommended.

Highway 267

Description: Although this is a State Highway, it is being considered within the County Scenic Highway System since it is not within the State Master Plan. This route begins at its intersection with Highway 28 in Kings Beach and extends

northwesterly over Brockway Summit and through Martis Valley to the Nevada County line. The scenery varies from overlooks of Lake Tahoe and Martis Valley to foreground views of aspen groves mixed with pine forest along streams parallel to the route. The Northstar Ski Area is located directly off this route.

Approximate length: 10 miles

Comment: The scenic resources visible from Highway 267 were spoken to in the goals and objectives of the 1974 Martis Valley General Plan:

Goal No. 7 - "Retain and enhance the open, pastoral character and scenic quality of the Valley floor".

Goal No. 8 - "Encourage scenic areas or greenbelt corridors along all major transportation routes".

A specific scenic corridor study should be prepared for this route utilizing the visual analysis report within the Martis Valley General Plan.

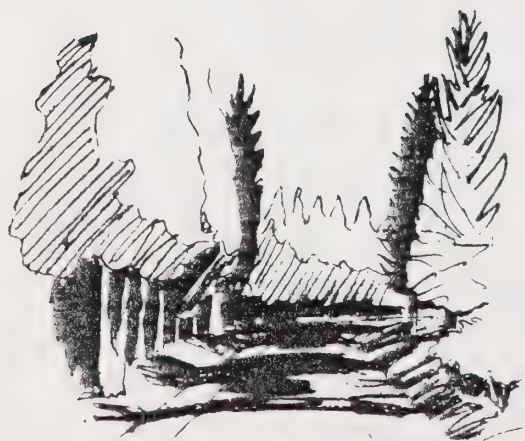
Interstate 80

Description: This route includes the remaining portion of I-80 within Placer County not shown on the State Scenic Highways System Master Plan. It extends from the Sacramento County line to the Nevada County line at Emigrant Gap, excepting those sections of the route located within the city

limits of Colfax, Auburn, Rocklin, and Roseville. The scenery includes rural open areas in the Loomis Basin, tree covered foothills near Auburn, and majestic mountain ranges in the Sierras.

Approximate length: 50 miles

Comment: The Interstate 80 corridor has received previous consideration for its scenic value by Placer County through the adoption of grading, billboard, and design review standards reflecting its importance as the major entry route into Placer County and into California, as well. The scenic resources along this route are currently being protected through these programs and additional new standards may not be necessary. The visual resources on lands along this route should continue to be protected and further studies should be made of possible additional protective measures. It is recommended these studies be made in cooperation with the U. S. Forest Service.



V

PROTECTION OF SCENIC ROUTES

INTRODUCTION

As indicated earlier, many existing programs are currently being utilized to protect Placer County's scenic resources. These and other suggested new protection measures consist primarily of land use and development standards. The extent of these standards is best represented by the State of California Planning and Design Standards which were developed for the State Scenic Highway System. These standards, as shown below, are excerpted from Article 2.5 of the California Streets and Highways Code, the code pursuant to which the Scenic Highways Element is to be developed.

Planning and Design Standards for Scenic Highways..

261 . . . "The standards for official scenic highways shall also require that local governmental agencies have taken such action as may be necessary to protect the scenic appearance of the scenic corridor, the bank of land generally adjacent to the highway right-of-way, including but not limited to: (1) regulation of land use and intensity of development; (2) detailed land and site planning; (3) control of outdoor advertising; (4) careful attention to and control of earth-moving and landscaping; and (5) the design and appearance of structures and equipment."

These planning and design standards are obviously very general and can serve only as a guide to the development

of specific implementation measures. A more detailed description of the existing and proposed protective measures for Placer County's Scenic Routes is outlined below, however, it should be noted that these may be refined and expanded upon at the time specific scenic corridor plans and studies are completed for each route. These controls, unless otherwise specified, apply to both state (official) and County (unofficial) scenic routes.

Development Controls

Plans

a. Existing

1. The 1967 Placer County General Plan established a County-wide land use plan with planning and development standards which were conceived with the protection of the County's scenic and other natural resources in mind. An example of this is the designation of many scenic areas as "greenbelt and open space" and/or "timber croplands" on the plan.
2. Many area General Plans speak to protective measures for scenic routes within their plan boundaries. This should be continued as it provides local citizen input in the scenic highway program.

3. The Open Space, Conservation and Recreation, and Transportation Elements of the County General Plan provide various policies and standards which directly and indirectly relate to protection and enhancement of scenic highways. These include provisions for discouraging over-development of recreation areas, for preserving historical and open space areas, and for insuring transportation design techniques that recognize scenic and other environmental features along the County's roadways.
4. The Gold Rush Parkway Plan, as adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors, provides some general protective measures for routes within the Parkway. These standards should be recognized and used as guidelines for adopting specific controls for scenic corridors which are also within the Parkway System.

b. Proposed

1. A scenic corridor development plan shall be prepared for each scenic route recommended for official designation as a California State Scenic Highway. The format for this plan has been established by the Scenic Highways Division of Cal-Trans.
2. Specific scenic corridor studies may be prepared for County scenic routes depending on whether existing controls along any particular route are adequate or not. The format should be similar to that used by Cal-Trans.

Zoning

a. Existing

1. Many corridors along scenic routes are currently zoned for agricultural, open space, forestry, or other compatible land uses. The existing zoning along each corridor should be analyzed closely as to its effectiveness for protecting scenic resources.

2. Design Control zone districts have been established in Placer County and their purpose is outlined in Section 1100(a) of the Zoning Ordinance as follows:

"To provide special regulations for the protection, enhancement, and use of places, sites, buildings, and structures having special character and aesthetic interest and value and to impose standards and reasonable controls upon the appearance of private property within public view".

These districts are used throughout the County in commercial and high density residential areas. The protective measures they provide should be used to their fullest when reviewing plans for any development along a scenic route.

3. Sign regulations are currently provided in the Zoning Ordinance for both appurtenant (on-site) and outdoor advertising (off-site or billboard) signs. These regulations are in the process of being revised and updated for the Lake Tahoe area.

All existing and future sign controls along scenic routes should be strictly enforced.

4. The Zoning Ordinance also includes building height and setback regulations which provide additional protection of scenic corridors. These controls should be strictly adhered to.

b. Proposed

1. Special building height and setback regulations may be necessary to adequately protect the views along certain corridors.

2. The establishment of a new "scenic corridor" or other similar zone district may be desirable to more clearly delineate the scenic corridors boundaries and provide a uniform set of regulations.

Subdivision Regulations

a. Existing

1. The Placer County Subdivision Ordinance currently provides controls for subdividing land which can be used to protect scenic corridors from undesirable development practices such as unnecessary grading or tree removal, poor location of utility lines, unlimited access points, poor road or lot design, and installation of obstructions such as fences, walls, etc.

These existing standards should be applied to the maximum possible for any subdivision development within a scenic corridor.

2. Existing provisions within both the Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances create incentives for cluster or planned unit developments. The use of this type of development should be encouraged within scenic corridors.

3. Landscaping is another tool available in the subdivision review process. Landscaping and/or landscape mounding can enhance a scenic corridor while providing a visual screen from nonscenic areas.

4. Scenic setbacks have been required on recent subdivisions where a major route passed through the project. This requirement should be continued on future projects fronting on scenic routes.

b. Proposed

1. Most of the existing regulations affecting scenic resources are limited to major subdivisions. The Minor Land Division Ordinance should be amended to include provisions for such things as scenic setbacks, landscaping, grading, and utility locations where a minor land division is proposed along a scenic route.

Underground Utilities

a. Existing

1. The California Public Utility Commission currently requires underground installation of electric and communication lines within 1,000 feet of any officially designated State Scenic Highway. This requirement is unrealistic in many cases where the scenic resources are not visible within 1,000 feet of a scenic route. Placer County, with the assistance of the County Supervisors Association of California and the Division of Scenic Highways within Caltrans, should request the Public Utilities Commission to modify their ruling to allow local agencies to determine what areas within a scenic corridor should require undergrounding.
2. Utility undergrounding programs are currently being studied and implemented in the communities of Tahoe City, Kings Beach, Foresthill, Loomis, and other urban areas of the County. These studies should be given greater consideration in areas where a scenic corridor is involved.

3. Undergrounding is also a standard requirement for subdivisions with parcel sizes of less than 3 acres.

b. Proposed

1. All utility lines should be installed underground in any commercial or high density area within any state or local scenic corridor. Undergrounding in low density, agricultural, or other non-urban scenic corridors may not be justified as this could create a hardship for individual property owners who would otherwise be required to install underground utilities in areas where overhead lines are acceptable. The individual specific scenic corridor studies should include recommendations for which portions should require undergrounding.

Other Regulatory Programs

a. Existing

1. The California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act has been used in Placer County since its inception. Over 130,000 acres are under contract at this time. This has been an effective tool for preserving the County's agricultural lands with the side benefit of maintaining large open space areas along scenic routes. Future applications for land conservation agreements within scenic corridors should be encouraged.

2. Placer County has recently adopted an Open Space Easement program wherein valuable open space lands can be preserved through a tax reducing development control contract. The use of these contracts should be encouraged along scenic routes.

3. Placer County currently has a Grading Ordinance in effect in the Tahoe Area and within 500 feet of either side of Interstate 80. This ordinance should be expanded to include all land within any scenic corridor. Grading controls should be strictly enforced if the scenic resources are to be protected.

4. All existing building and fire prevention controls should be tightly observed within scenic corridors.

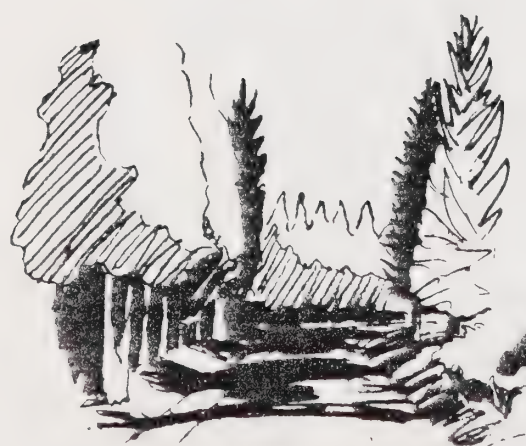
b. Proposed

1. Anti-litter and weed abatement ordinances for scenic corridors may be appropriate.

2. All public property should be identified and a program for enhancement and maintenance of scenic resources should be established in cooperation with affected agencies.

3. Gifts of land and/or the dedication of land for scenic purposes to the County should be sought and encouraged.

4. Consideration should be given to joint preparation and coordinated implementation of corridor development plans and programs between adjacent jurisdictions.



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AND
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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